



Airman 1st Class Ronda Wetterlund inspects gas mask canisters. The canisters will be inserted into chemical warfare defense bags once their expiration dates are checked.



Staff Sgt. Charles Gilbert and Staff Sgt. Nicole Peck pack and seal an M-16 into a secure weapon's case.

Can't go without mo'

War Readiness maintains and distributes mo' bags, mo' equipment and mo' weapons

by Laura Pellegrino
Sunburst staff writer

War readiness plays a role in today's Air Force. While many Team Holloman airmen prepare to deploy, and for those who have deployed, people agree the Army-green mobility bags are essential for survival in combat areas.

Picking up mobility bags is easy, but behind the scenes, the 19 members of the 49th Logistics Readiness Squadron War Readiness section must organize, pack and maintain more than 6,000 general purpose (A), extreme cold weather (B) or chemical warfare defense (C) bags to ensure they are ready at a moment's notice.

"Prior to departing for any contingency and most training deployments, personnel are required to be issued some or all of the differently configured

bags, and often even weapons," said Master Sgt. Leslie Holland, 49th LRS War Readiness NCOIC. "War readiness is responsible for providing all required assets for operations in a chemical or hostile environment to all members of the 49th Fighter Wing and tenant units."

In the A bags, members will find sleeping bags and mess kits containing a fork, knife and dish. The B bags are designed for cold weather locations and include a parka, gloves and boots. The C bags contain chemical gear.

Weapons are provided to members based on their deployment location. Currently, there are about 150 people deployed with M-16s, M-9s or both.

To stay prepared for mass deployments, the section has more than 2,100 M-16s and M-9s in storage, said Staff Sgt. Nicole Peck, 49th LRS Weapons NCOIC.

During a typical month, anywhere from 10 to 100 people headed for other countries stop at the mobility processing line, Sergeant Holland said.

Before a mass deployment or an air expeditionary force cycle, that number can increase to around 600.

When dealing with so many people going to hostile locations, accuracy and efficiency are a number one priority.

"If these bags aren't right, people die," said Staff Sgt. Michael Bittenbender, 49th LRS War Readiness supervisor.

The war readiness team must also be accurate when tracking the shelflife of the mobility bag's contents.

"A computer system keeps track of the items in each bag," Sergeant Bittenbender said. "If Air Combat Command tells us all canisters with a certain lot number have gone bad, we have to pull out the bags and replace those canisters."

Sometimes, this could mean taking all 6,000 bags off the shelf to replace their contents, Sergeant Bittenbender said.

According to Sergeant Holland, the most fulfilling part of the job is helping deployed members.

"Just knowing that we have supplied the best equipment to those deploying to a possible chemical or hostile environment is fulfilling," he said. "By performing continuous inspections, we know we are helping to keep deployed members safe."



Airman Ryan Woods inspects the contents of a mobility bag before it is given to someone tasked with deployment.



Photos by Airman 1st Class Vanessa LaBoy

Senior Airman Carrington Ible catches a bag from Senior Airman Phillip Jones. The bag is one of 6,000 packed, organized and maintained by the war readiness section.